



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
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IN REPLY REFER TO:

CMC-MCU  
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WHITE LETTER NO. 4-12

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps  
To: All Marines

Subj: READING IN THE MARINE CORPS... "THIRTY YEAR OLD BODY AND  
5000 YEAR OLD MIND"

Encl: (1) Commandant's Professional Reading List, 08 Nov 12

1. In 1989, General Al Gray promulgated the first Commandant's Reading List and challenged Marines of every rank to re-dedicate themselves to the study of their profession. Our twenty-ninth Commandant clearly understood that the development and broadening of the mind is a critical aspect of the true warrior's preparation for battle. General Gray viewed reading as a means of preparing for the future, and combat in particular. He ensured that his Marines knew he considered mental preparation as important as physical conditioning or even MOS training.

2. The introduction of that first list was a milestone in the history of our Corps. It represented an important and useful manifestation of the professional study that has always characterized us as Marines. The idea of Marines diligently pursuing the profession of arms by reading on their own has resonated inside and outside the Corps. Comparing themselves to the most professional military organizations throughout history, Marines take great pride in being part of a thinking and learning organization. The emphasis on thoughtful reading has stood us in good stead over the last 11 years. The adaptation and flexibility shown by Marines faced with a variety of different situations and challenges was anchored in many years of mental preparation for combat.

3. Over recent years I have become increasingly concerned that Marines are not reading enough anymore. Many are not reading at all. This has happened for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, the last 11 years of continuous combat in Iraq and Afghanistan have been characterized by a high operational tempo that made extraordinary demands on time. Under the pressure of competing requirements, reading was one of the first things to

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go. For all practical purposes it has been gone for years. Our senior leaders have not emphasized the importance of reading.

4. Faced with a period of fiscal austerity and an uncertain world, it's more important now than ever before to dedicate time to read and to think. As we prepare ourselves for whatever is to come, the study of military history offers the inexpensive chance to learn from the hard-won experience of others, find a template for solving existing challenges, and avoid making the same mistakes twice. As it was once wisely put, reading provides a "better way to do business... it doesn't always provide all the answers... but it lights what is often a dark path ahead." Any book thoughtfully read sharpens the mind and improves on an individual's professional potential.

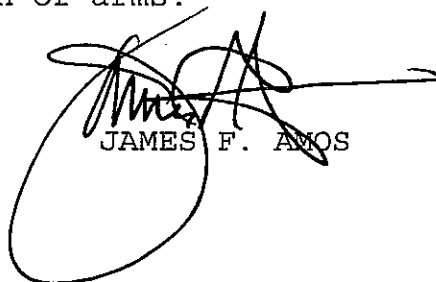
5. Whatever has caused our emphasis on reading to atrophy, we as Marines and as leaders, need to restore its preeminence at every level. The Marine Corps will return to its roots as an organization that studies and applies the lessons of history. The attached Commandant's Professional Reading List represents an updated version of those books most pertinent to the development of professional skills at each level. I have personally reviewed it, and made both deletions and additions. It forms the core of an expanded professional military education program that I expect to be overseen by Commanding Officers and unit leaders at every level. Every Marine will read at least three books from the list each year. All books listed at each level of rank are required, while the books listed under categories are recommended readings to expand understanding in specific areas. The list represents only a starting point, and will ideally whet the appetite for further reading and study. Commanders and senior enlisted will reinvigorate the critical emphasis on reading in their units and develop a unit reading program. Books will be selected for reading and discussion, with time set aside in the schedule to that end. The idea that true professionals study their profession all the time - not just in PME schools - will continue to be a strongly emphasized theme in all of our professional schools...officer and enlisted.

6. This letter represents only the first installment in this effort. On 1 January, a follow-on ALMAR will be published that provides further detail. I have also directed that specific guidance be promulgated that ensures that item G-1 (Professional

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Military Education) in the fitness report is being used to accurately describe a Marine's dedication to the pursuit of life-long learning.

7. Let me end by saying that I am well aware that much has been asked of our leadership in recent years - some may see this as yet another requirement. I ask that this white letter not be taken in that light. Reading is a critical continuing action. We need to find the time for it just as we find time weekly for individual and unit physical conditioning. What I am calling for is nothing less than a renewal of a critical aspect of our commitment to the profession of arms.



JAMES F. AMOS

*Marines... the study of our  
profession is "what we do" - it  
tells all... "who we are!"*

# United States Marine Corps

## Commandant's Professional Reading List

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08 Nov 12

### Commandant's Choice Books

- A Message to Garcia by E. Hubbard
- Leading Marines (MCWP 6-11) by The United States Marine Corps
- The Warrior Ethos by S. Pressfield
- Warfighting (MCDP 1) by The United States Marine Corps

### Entry Level: Recruit / Poolee

- Battle Cry by L. Uris
- Corps Values by Z. Miller
- Making the Corps by T. Ricks
- The Red Badge of Courage by S. Crane

### Entry Level: Candidate / Midshipman

- Battle Cry by L. Uris
- Corps Values by Z. Miller
- I'm Staying with My Boys by J. Proser and J. Cutter
- Making the Corps by T. Ricks
- My Men are My Heroes by N. Helms
- The Killer Angels by M. Shaara

### Primary Level: Pvt-Cpl

- Enders Game by O. Card
- Gates of Fire by S. Pressfield
- Marine! The Life of Chesty Puller by B. Davis
- My Men are My Heroes by N. Helms
- Rifleman Dodd by C. Forester
- The Last Stand of Fox Company by B. Drury and T. Clavin
- The Marines of Montford Point, Americas First Black Marines by M. McLaurin

### Primary Level: WO, 2ndLt, 1stLt

- All Quiet on the Western Front by E. Remarque
- Battle Leadership by A. Von Schell
- Gates of Fire by S. Pressfield
- Marine! The Life of Chesty Puller by B. Davis
- Matterhorn: A Novel of the Vietnam War by K. Marlantes
- The Art of War by S. Tzu
- The Defense of Duffer's Drift by E. Swinton
- The Forgotten Soldier by G. Sajer
- The Last Stand of Fox Company by B. Drury and T. Clavin
- The Marines of Montford Point, Americas First Black Marines by M. McLaurin
- U.S. Constitution
- With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa by E. Sledge

# United States Marine Corps Commandant's Professional Reading List

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## Career Level: Sgt, SSgt

- First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps by V. Krulak
- Islands of the Damned by R. V. Burgin
- Outliers by M. Gladwell
- Quartered Safe Out Here by G. Fraser
- Soldiers of God by R. Kaplan
- Storm of Steel by E. Junger
- The Defense of Duffer's Drift by E. Swinton
- The Forgotten Soldier by G. Sajer
- The Killer Angels by M. Shaara
- U.S. Constitution
- With the Old Breed by E. Sledge

## Career Level: CWO2, CWO3, Capt

- Attacks by E. Rommel
- Black Hearts by J. Frederick
- First to Fight: An Inside View of the U.S. Marine Corps by V. Krulak
- Infantry in Battle (FMFRP 12-2)
- Into the Tiger's Jaw by F. Petersen
- Islands of the Damned by R. V. Burgin
- On Killing by D. Grossman
- Outliers by M. Gladwell
- Quartered Safe Out Here by G. Fraser
- Sources of Power by G. Klein
- The Virtues of War by S. Pressfield
- U.S. Constitution
- War Made New by M. Boot

## Intermediate Level: GySgt, MSgt, 1stSgt

- All Quiet on the Western Front by E. Remarque
- American Spartans by J. Warren
- Fields of Fire by J. Webb
- Flags of Our Fathers by J. Bradley
- Helmet for My Pillow by R. Leckie
- On Killing by D. Grossman
- The Age of the Unthinkable: Why the New World Disorder Constantly Surprises Us And What We Can Do About It by J. Ramo
- The Changing Face of War by M. Van Creveld
- This Kind of War by T. Fehrenbach
- U.S. Constitution
- We Were Soldiers Once and Young by H. Moore and J. Galloway

## Intermediate Level: CWO4, CWO5, Maj, LtCol

- Battle Cry of Freedom by J. McPherson
- Blink by M. Gladwell
- Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War by R. Coram
- Brute: The Life of Victor Krulak by R. Coram

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- Carnage and Culture by V. Hanson
- Command Culture by J. Muth
- Defeat into Victory by W. Slim
- Forgotten Warriors by T. Hammes
- Hot, Flat and Crowded by T. Freidman
- Just and Unjust Wars by M. Walzer
- Military Innovation in the Interwar Period by W. Murray and A. Millett
- Ripples of Battle by V. Hanson
- The Age of the Unthinkable: Why the New World Disorder Constantly Surprises Us And What We Can Do About It by J. Ramo
- The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle by J. Gray
- This Kind of War by T. Fehrenbach

## Senior Level: MGySgt, SgtMaj

- Achilles in Vietnam by J. Shay
- Assignment Pentagon: How to Excel in a Bureaucracy by P. Smith and D. Gerstein
- Command Culture by J. Muth
- Forgotten Warriors by T. Hammes
- Hot, Flat and Crowded by T. Freidman
- Just and Unjust Wars by M. Walzer
- No Bended Knee by M. Twining
- The Face of Battle by J. Keegan
- The Mask of Command by J. Keegan

## Senior Level: Col-Gen

- Another Bloody Century by C. Gray
- Assignment Pentagon: How to Excel in a Bureaucracy by P. Smith and D. Gerstein
- Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Lies that Led to Vietnam by H. McMaster
- Diplomacy by H. Kissinger
- How Wars End by G. Rose
- Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past by J. Gaddis
- Little Book of Economics: How the Economy Works in the Real World by G. Ip
- Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle by S. Biddle
- Modern Strategy by C. Gray
- Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesman and Leadership in Wartime by E. Cohen
- Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln by D. Goodwin
- The Federalist Papers by A. Hamilton
- The Guns of August by B. Tuchman
- The Landmark Thucydides by R. Strassler
- The Revenge of Geography by R. Kaplan

## Category: Aviation

- 100 Years of Marine Corps Aviation: An Illustrated History by R. Kaufman.
- Hammer from Above: Marine Air Combat Over Iraq by J. Stout
- Marine Air: The History of the Flying Leathernecks in Words and Photos by R. Dorr
- On Yankee Station: The Naval Air War over Vietnam by J. Nichols

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- The Art of Airpower, Sun Tzu Revisited by S. Kainikara
- The Naval Air War in Korea by R. Hallion
- U.S. Marine Corps Aviation Since 1912 by P. Mersky

### Category: Logistics

- Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army by D. Engels
- Clockspeed by C. Fine
- Feeding Mars: Logistics in Western Warfare from the Middle Ages to the Present by J. Lynn
- Keep from All Thoughtful Men: How U.S. Economists Won WWII by J. Lacey
- Pacific Express: The Critical Role of Military Logistics in WWII by W. McGee
- Recurring Logistic Problems As I Have Observed Them by C. Magruder
- Supplying War by M. VanCreveld

### Category: Counterinsurgency

- Counterinsurgency Warfare by D. Galula
- Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife by J. Nagl and P. Schoomaker
- Street Without Joy by B. Fall
- The Accidental Guerilla by D. Kilcullen
- The Village by B. West
- War Comes to Long An by J. Race

### Category: Roots of Maneuver Warfare

- Air Power and Maneuver Warfare by M. Van Creveld
- Assault from the Sea: Essays on the History of Amphibious Warfare by M. Bartlett
- Maneuver Warfare by G. Galvin and R. Hooker
- Maneuver Warfare Handbook by W. Lind
- The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War: Its Theory and Practice in the Pacific by J. Isely and P. Crowl

### Category: Wounded Warrior

- Ascent by B. McGhie
- Courage After Fire: Coping Strategies for Troops Returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and Their Families by K. Armstrong, S. Best and P. Domenici
- Down Range: To Iraq and Back by B. Cantrell and C. Dean
- Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming by J. Shay
- Once a Warrior Always a Warrior: Navigating the Transition from Combat to Home by C. Hoge
- Once a Warrior: Wired for Life by B. Cantrell and C. Dean
- Overcoming Post-Deployment Syndrome: A Six Step Mission to Health by D. Cifu and C. Blake
- Shadow of the Sword by J. Workman
- Soft Spots: A Marine's Memoir of Combat & Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder by C. Van Winkle
- Unbroken: A WWII Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption by L. Hillenbrand
- War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder by E. Tick
- Warrior Mindset by M. Asken, L. Christensen, D. Grossman
- What It Is Like to Go to War by K. Marlantes

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### Category: Strategic Thinking

- Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Professional and Personal Life by R. Paul and L. Elder
- General System Theory by L. Von Bertalanffy
- Harnessing Complexity by R. Axelrod and M. Cohen
- Rethinking the Principles of War by A. McIvor
- The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable by N. Taleb
- The Copernican Revolution by T. Kuhn
- Thinking Fast and Slow by D. Kahneman
- Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers by R. Neustadt and E. May

### Category: Regional & Cultural Studies

- Angry Wind, Through Muslim Black Africa by Truck, Bus, Boat and Camel by J. Tayler
- Eastward to Tartary: Travels in the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus by R. Kaplan
- Monsoon by R. Kaplan
- Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea by B. Demick
- The Great Arab Conquests by H. Kennedy
- Understanding Arabs: A Contemporary Guide to Arab Society by M. Nydell
- What Went Wrong?: The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East by B. Lewis

### Category: Leadership

- Developing the Leaders Around You by J. Maxwell
- Heroic Leadership by C. Lowney
- Leadership and the New Science by M. Wheatly
- Lincoln on Leadership: Executive Strategies for Tough Times by D. Phillips
- Once a Marine by N. Popaditch and M. Steere
- Start with Why by S. Sinek
- The Power of Communication by H. Garcia
- The Starfish and the Spider by O. Brafman and R. Beckstrom